5 Barriers to Achieving Business Goals

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Organizations use strategy and goals to move a business forward. However, a successful strategy is dependent on how well goals are achieved. Organizations need to have a structured **performance management** process to ensure **business goals** maintain priority until they are achieved.

Some businesses use the SMART goal model to help ensure that goals are achieved within the allotted timeframe. Well-written **SMART goals** lay out the framework and accountability for goal completion. This model also supports managing employee performance.

The model clearly defines the goal and specifies what the end result will look like after the goal has been completed. This clarity helps to ensure that employees understand the expectation and the targeted outcome.

Unfortunately, there are barriers that are inherent in many organizations that limit their ability to achieve goals – and ultimately strategy. These barriers can slow employee productivity and stall an employee's ability to get the job done. When organizations are aware of these common barriers, they can put processes in place to avoid these common pitfalls.

5 Barriers to Achieving Business Goals

1. Changes in Strategy

Market conditions are constantly changing. This constant movement can have an impact on an organization's ability to achieve annual goals. Organizations should be continually assessing performance to keep pace with today's changing business environment.

This continual assessment can have an impact on long-term strategy and should be considered when developing a strategic plan and organizational goals. This is a reason that many organizations now follow more short-term strategies because the market can turn in an instant.

For instance, the Covid pandemic changed how most businesses operate very quickly. If the market dictates a change in strategy, goals should be adjusted to reflect that change.

2. Decision Making Process

Sometimes it is the decision-making process that slows employee productivity. It is unfortunate, but it is common for goals to be held up by the decision-makers themselves. When a pivotal decision, that needs to be made before a goal can be completed, is held up by the manager who has the decision-making authority, it delays the entire process.

For example, let's say there is a department goal to change vendors for payroll services by the end of the 3rd quarter. The accounting manager gets bids and **negotiates with three**

different vendors, presents the bids to her director but the department director doesn't give the final approval to move forward.

In this instance, the accounting manager has taken the goal as far as she can so she should not be held accountable for the goal not being completed. However, the department director who holds up the process is the person responsible for the goal not being completed and should be held accountable at the end of the goal period.

3. Lack of Resources

Accomplishing any goal is dependent on three things – people, time, and money. There needs to be someone responsible for completing the goal and that person must have the time and budgeted resources to work on the goal.

For example, let's say that the marketing manager has a goal to revamp the organization's website with a new logo, look and feel by the end of the 2nd quarter. This manager will need to have the budget dollars to pay a designer and webmaster. If these resources are not available, her ability to achieve that goal will be hindered.

This is why it is important to incorporate annual goals into the **budgeting process** to ensure the resources are available to support the completion of all business goals.

4. Unclear Expectations

There are times when employees simply do not understand the expectations. Department **supervisors are responsible for communicating** very clearly what it is the employee is expected to do and the timeline for completing tasks.

Goals should be written using the SMART model because this format, by design, creates very clear expectations. When goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely there can be no confusion about what exactly needs to be done to accomplish the goal.

For example, let's say that your purchasing manager has a goal of **researching new phone plans**. This goal is not very specific. However, if she has a goal of **reducing phone expenses by 10% by the end of 20XX,** the second goal is very clear on what the expectation is in a very measurable way.

Learn to err on the side of too much information. Be consistent with setting expectations and communicate with employees often about their responsibilities.

5. Perceived Priority

It can be exciting to develop a strategy and think about the improvements that can be made. When organizations go through this planning process it is very clear what the priorities are. However, sometimes goals are the focus at the beginning of the year but as the months go by the attention and chatter slows.

> When management stops talking about it, employees perceive that it is no longer a priority. Achieving goals needs to be kept at the forefront by continuing to have conversations about them, or it may be perceived that the goals are no longer important. Goals should be discussed on a regular basis until they are achieved.

Managers wear many hats and often need to turn their attention to urgent matters of the day. The difficulty in managing any organization is balancing the day-to-day responsibilities with the time and attention needed to achieve annual goals.

This tender balance can be a challenge in today's faced-paced environment. Successful organizations have learned to manage this tension so that goals and strategies remain a priority. Organizations need to develop a focus on their priorities. Otherwise, another year may go by without moving the organization a little closer to achieving its long-term strategy and ultimately its mission!